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ABSTRACT

This study explored the concept of retention as it relates to African American administrators at predominantly white institutions, focusing on professional growth factors that predominantly white institutions can target to facilitate retention of African American administrators. Motivation-Hygiene Theory was used to determine methods of retention within the categories of hygiene factors and motivator factors. The Delphi study was conducted from an interpretivist perspective. Six male and four female African American administrators at the dean level and above participated. Findings suggest that the most important step in addressing professional growth needs is ensuring that the administrators is given the authority to make decisions within the job description. Also important were establishing mentoring programs and providing release time and funding for research, scholarship, and professional development. It is important to enable the administrator to develop knowledge about the institution by broadening his or her participation beyond diversity-related committees and functions. Providing a full range of leadership opportunities is helpful, as is providing the financial support for attendance at professional meetings. These recommendations may also help in the retention of administrators from other minority groups. (Contains 54 references.) (SLD)

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Retention of African American Administrators at Predominantly White Institutions: Using Professional Growth Factors to Inform the Discussion

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Retention of African American Administrators at Predominantly White Institutions: Using Professional Growth Factors to Inform the Discussion

Although institutions of higher and postsecondary education have made advancements with recruiting African Americans, retention aspects are not yet paramount (Crase, 1994; Holmes, Ebbers, Robinson, & Mugenda, 2000; Jackson & Rosas, 1999; Loo & Rolison, 1986). Discussions centered on the retention of African Americans in predominantly White institutions have intensified with the increasing external pressure of accountability (Cabrera, Nora, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Powell, 1992; Rendon, 1994; Turner & Meyers, 2000). While the literature is extant on the retention of African American students and faculty, relatively little is known about retaining African American administrators. Within the last decade, attention has been redirected to considering the retention of African American administrators as a benchmark for institutions' commitment to diversity (Davis, 1994; Jackson, 2001).

The central purpose of this paper is to explore the concept of retention as it relates to African American administrators at predominantly White institutions. More specifically, the purpose is to identify professional growth factors that predominantly White institutions can target to facilitate the retention of African American administrators. This will be achieved by utilizing the bifurcated structure of Motivation-Hygiene Theory to extrapolate methods of retention within the two pre-imposed categories: (1) hygiene factors; and (2) motivator factors. This study is part of a multi-phase inquiry on this topic. In an effort to shed light on how predominantly White institutions can retain African American administrators, two studies have attempted to develop recommendations (Jackson, 2001; Jackson & Flowers, 2001). Both of these

studies used the Motivation-Hygiene Theory to guide the analysis of data. Practical steps emerged from the first inquiry enabling predominantly White institutions to develop a framework of retention for African American administrators. After sifting these data through Motivation-Hygiene Theory, only two of the 10 steps that emerged were clearly growth factors for administrators. Jackson and Flowers (2001) examined the appropriate mix of strategies that promote retention and job satisfaction for African American student affairs administrators. While the findings from this study seemed to place equal emphasis on both motivation and hygiene factors, still little is known about motivation.

This unequal balance between motivation and hygiene provides the basis for this study. After reviewing the aforementioned, it seemed clear that predominantly White institutions needed to understand what is being done for racially and ethnically diverse administrators while retained at the institution. Therefore, another lens to view retention of African American administrators is through professional growth factors. Not only can institutions prevent attrition by creating a work environment (hygiene factors) that is conducive for African Americans to thrive, but institutions can target professional growth opportunities as well. Considering the important role that African American administrators can play in warming the "chilly climate" for African American students and faculty, it is critical to learn how to effectively retain them. In the context of this paper, the conceptualization of retention is based on length of tenure in position (Jackson, 2001). Therefore, the length of tenure of an African American administrator is compared against their White counterparts (Davis, 1994; Moore, 1983). Thus, the goal of PWIs is to equally maintain African American administrators in their positions in comparison to their White counterparts.

Setting the Context

Institutions of higher and postsecondary education have made commendable attempts to address and redress the complex issue of "administrative diversity" (Henry & Nixon, 1994; Jackson, 2000). Administrative diversity consists of two levels: (1) the number of administrators from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups who occupy administrative positions at colleges or universities; and (2) the types of positions occupied by administrators from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups at colleges and universities. While the many forms of diversity (e.g., racial, learning, and geographical) have been infused in the rhetoric of mission statements and action plans, many institutions have not yet identified the steps needed to develop a supportive climate for this tasks (Drummond, 1995). Clearly, higher and postsecondary institutions have recognized the need to incorporate into their cultural fabric the needs of people of color (Brown & Globetti, 1991; Menges & Exum, 1983). A move to abandon the "quick fix" approach toward well thought out and implemented approaches may lead to making diversity a reality (Booth, 1987; Howland, 1999; Powell, 1992; Smith, 1993).

If colleges and universities intend to increase the quality and representation of African American administrators, then critical concern must be placed on creating a campus climate that is more supportive for African Americans (Bridges, 1996; Tucker, 1980). Unfortunately, few institutions have implemented plans to enhance the quality of campus life for people of color. By increasing the number of African Americans who will be on campus for longer terms (i.e., faculty and administrators), it is argued that these groups will help "warm" the "chilly" climate and attract more African Americans (Davis, 1994).

In setting the context, it must be clear what is meant by administration in institutions of higher and postsecondary education. The administration of colleges and universities has been delineated in many ways, for the purpose of this paper it was parceled into three specialty areas: (1) academic affairs; (2) student affairs; and (3) administrative affairs (Sagaria, 1988). Positions that fall in the realm of academic affairs have direct supervision and coordination over the academic mission of the university, which includes the president, provost (vice president of academic affairs), and academic department chairs. As it relates to student affairs, these positions tend to provide oversight for the many out of class experiences and services provided for students by the university. Common positions are vice president for student affairs, director of housing, and dean of students. Administrative affairs encompass positions that fall outside the purview of the academic and student services mission such as vice president for budgeting/finance and director of alumni affairs (Moore & Sagaria, 1982). Further, the word administrator within this paper refers to a person in a managerial or policymaking role that may have line or staff functions (Moore, 1982, 1983). A line function is part of the institution's hierarchy and someone to whom others report. This person also reports to a supervisor. Staff functions fall outside of the institution's hierarchy with no one reporting to this person. For example, a person with the title "assistant to" is in the role of a staff person.

Related Literature on Administrators of Color

The employment status for administrators of color in relation to their White counterparts has remained fairly consistent (Chenoweth, 1998; Konrad & Pfeffer, 1991). The aforementioned studies found White males to be over represented in high

administrative level positions, while people of color were over represented in low administrative level positions. Within the last decade progress has been made toward advancing this employment status, the number of administrators of color in general, and the number in high administrative level positions has increased (Powell, 1992; Wilson, 1989). However, the technique used for achieving this progress has received vast criticism (Smith, 1993). Many higher and postsecondary institutions have developed and implemented initiatives that created positions for people of color in the spirit of affirmative action (Booth, 1987; Bridges, 1996; Powell, 1992). While this has aided progress, it has come at the expense of the incumbents who had to grapple with perceptions of incompetence and legitimacy (Brown & Globetti, 1991; Davis, 1994; Singh, Robinson, & Williams-Green, 1995; Tucker, 1980). Additionally, cautions are needed when looking at the breakthroughs of people of color in key administrative position, because 16% of administrators at HBCUs are White and 2.5% of administrators at PWI are people of color (Konrad & Pfeffer, 1991).

In reviewing the literature on African American administrators at predominantly White institutions, the results are nascent. This is not surprising, since the presence of a measurable number of African Americans in college and university administration is a recent phenomenon (Wilson, 1989). For the most part, African Americans like other people of color, often assumed administrative positions that have direct connections with the diversity mission of the university. In spite of the many talents of people in these positions, the peripheral nature of the position to the university's mission makes not only the experience limited, but also they have been valued less by "mainstream" academic administration (Bridges, 1996).

Crawford (1983) and Moore (1982, 1983) reported that more African American males held administrative positions than did African American females. As a result, the majority of the literature examines African American women administrators, attempting to help increase the numbers and decrease the negative experiences for this population (Rusher, 1996). African American women administrators face dual burdens of sexism and racism (Singh, Robinson, & Williams-Green, 1995; Williams, 1989; Wilson, 1989). Mentoring was a consistent method suggested in the literature as an important means of increasing both the number of African Americans in general serving as administrators in higher education and the percentage of those who reach senior level positions (Booth, 1987; Johnson, 1998; Judson, 1999; Powell, 1992).

Theoretical Framework

The retention of employees is an area of major concern for America (Dobbs, 2000). It is not uncommon to hear discussions about employee turnover rates as one of the important issues that must be addressed at board meetings (Hatcher, 1999; Lashbrook, 1997). Much of these turnover rates have been attributed to job satisfaction, and to how loyal Americans are to their employers today (Osif, & Harwood, 1995). Society's confidence in the integrity of the employer and employee relationship has eroded significantly over the past thirty years (Dobbs, 1999). Although older research, useful findings on employee satisfaction that is applicable to framing retention for African American administrators was performed (Herzberg, Mausner, & Syndermen, 1964). Resulting from this line of research focusing on workers' attitudes and motivation, the Motivation-Hygiene Theory was developed (Herzberg, 1979; Herzberg, Mathapo, & Wiener, 1974). The Motivation-Hygiene Theory classifies all human needs as it relates to

work into two sets: (1) pain avoidance; and (2) growth. The type of incentives that work distinguishes these two sets of needs. The incentives that satisfy pain avoidance are called hygiene factors because they are maintenance factors and are primarily preventative. These incentives are environmental and external to the job (e.g., working conditions). Incentives that satisfy the growth needs are internal to the job (e.g., responsibility), which are called motivator factors.

Methodology

This Delphi study was conducted from an interpretivist perspective (Geertz, 1973). This approach seeks an informed, sophisticated understanding and explanation of actual meanings (e.g., events, situations, and behaviors) from participants. The focus on meaning is central to what is known as the "interpretive" approach or perspective (Geertz, 1973; Maxwell, 1996).

Study Design

The Delphi method was originally developed by the RAND Corporation to predict future military defense needs (Lindstone & Turoff, 1975). This method is a process for formulating a group consensus on subject matter where conclusive information is lacking (Cochran, 1983). Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson (1975) define the Delphi method as " a method for the systematic solicitation and collection of judgments on a particular topic through a set of carefully designed sequential questionnaires interspersed with summarized information and feedback of opinions derived from earlier responses" (p. 10). It is useful in gathering data from subject-matter experts without requiring face-to-face contact. The method was especially useful in this

study because it helped pool the knowledge base of a group of African American administrators from across the country.

In general, the Delphi procedure consists of gathering individual answers to pre-formulated open-ended questions usually by questionnaire, using multiple rounds of questionnaires where the information feedback between rounds is carefully controlled by the researcher (Cochran, 1983). The major disadvantage or limitation of the Delphi method is the selection of participants. The sample must include those who are willing to participate, familiar with the subject matter, willing to donate their time, and at the same time, capable of being randomly selected in the interests of validity (Cochran, 1983).

Participants

A panel of experts was established based on professional success and experience in college and university administration. Participants for this study were recommended on the basis of their professional roles and/or recognition by peers and their familiarity with college and university administration. All panelists were practicing African American administrator working at predominantly White institutions, at the dean level and above. Ten administrators were invited and agreed to participate on the panel of experts. Demographic data on the par cipants show that six (60%) were male and four (40%) were female. The employment distribution was as follows: four worked in academic affairs (40%), four worked in student affairs (40%), and two worked in administrative affairs (20%).

Data Collection

A modified, two round Delphi method was used to collect data for this study (Delbecq, Van deVen, & Gustafsun, 1975). The Delphi method began with identifying a

group of individuals who have knowledge of the subject matter under study (Cochran, 1983). After the potential panel of experts was identified, a request to participate was issued. The potential panel members were contacted and explained the Delphi method. Included in this explanation was information regarding the subject of study and the amount of time required for participation.

Upon identifying the panel of experts, two rounds of questionnaires were used to collect data (Murry & Hammons, 1995). The first round used an opened question to obtain opinions of the panel of experts regarding what professional growth factors could predominantly White institutions implement to help retain African American administrators. Murry and Hammons (1995) describes this round as an "anonymous brainstorming session" (p. 424). After the responses were returned, these data were analyzed and used to develop a list of practical steps for the next round. In the second round, participants were asked to rank, edit, and comment on the steps from the first round. Upon receipt of the second round of responses, the original list was modified with the feedback from the panel of experts. The whole data collection process was facilitated through electronic mail.

Data Analysis

Round one yielded 42 various recommendations for practical steps that predominantly White institutions could use to promote professional growth for African American administrators, nine emerged as the most commonly recommended steps. Round two consisted of the Delphi panel reacting to and ranking each step, and identifying needed additions. As a result of the comments from the panel after round two, the practical steps were revised and ordered.

The analysis of data collected in this study passed through three interrelated stages: (1) data reduction; (2) data display; and (3) conclusion and implications (Keeves, 1988, p. 518). Data reduction was managed through a qualitative thematic strategy used to organize and make meaning of the collected data. This process led to single-case level analyses from which findings were aggregated and incorporated into themes. This process permitted important themes and categories to emerge inductively from these data across cases. Findings from the rounds of data collection were clustered by key themes (i.e., recommendations) across panelists and single cases (i.e., steps). The displayed data consisted of the practical steps supplied by the participants. The conclusion and implications are materialized through the development of the final comprehensive list of practical steps and discussion of them.

Cautionary Notes

Several cautionary notes are provided in order to properly situate the findings for this study in the discourse of administrative diversity at predominantly White institutions. First, African Americans are not monolithic, having different rearing patterns, socio-economic classes, educational background and experiences, and educational goals. Additionally, some are single, married, gay, single parent, etc. Two, there are gender differences in African American professionals seeking or gainfully employed in administrative positions. Third, there are different types of administrative positions (e.g., entry-level, middle-management, and senior-level) in higher education. The differences in the role one plays in the various positions dictate expectations by those holding the positions. Fourth, some administrative positions are tied to faculty appointments, which will bring with it a different set of expectations and norms.

Fifth, knowing the number of other African Americans employed on the campus in various positions can make a difference in the administrator's experience. Sixth, the ethnic and cultural diversity of the student body plays an important part in perceived campus climate. Seventh, African Americans can tell if an institution is making a conscious and sincere effort to employ and retain African American faculty and administrators. This does not include special treatment, but rather sensitivity and awareness of the person's needs. The following steps are not presented in a linear manner; there organization reflects the ranking and prioritization of these steps by the panel of experts. These steps by no means are presented as a method to solve the problem of administrative diversity on the campus of a predominantly White institution. However, they are meant to be heuristic in nature for predominantly White institutions grappling with developing a framework or working document to maintain a balanced campus climate for African American administrators. To the extent that these steps can aid in that goal, they have served there intended purpose.

Findings

Ensure that the administrator is given the authority to make decisions within the stated job description. The panel of experts felt that this was the most important suggestion/step to addressing professional growth needs. Show the administrator that upper level administration has confidence in his or her decision-making abilities. If a poor judgment is made in a situation, the administrator and their direct supervisor should be able to have candid conversations about the decision. It can be extremely frustrating to be micromanaged if someone is in an administrative position. An individual has been

hired to carry out the responsibilities of a specific job; the individual should be trusted to do it.

Establishing mentoring programs that focus on career and academic development with sincere and seasoned mentors. Mentors are important aspects in facilitating professional growth. Sincere and seasoned mentors can challenge and support the administrator as he or she advance in their careers. Hopefully, mentors will be honest with their comments and constructive criticism. More seasoned administrators/mentors should make less experienced or new administrators aware of the triumphs and challenges they have faced at the college or university. Mentors can also encourage the administrator to pursue his or her aspirations and new professional endeavors.

Provide release time and funding for research and scholarship (academic administration) and professional development activities (student affairs administration). This suggestion could be extremely beneficial to the administrator; he or she might have the opportunity to give presentations/workshops at professional conferences or on other college campuses. Additionally, time to prepare and submit manuscripts for publication in academic journals can be a valuable and rewarding experience. It could also lead to other opportunities for professional growth such as consulting work, grant writing, or professional speaking engagements.

Enable the administrator to develop knowledge about the college or university by broadening his or her participation beyond the diversity related committees and functions. This suggestion helps the administrator gain a better understanding of the organizational structure and operations of the university. It may provide insight into the challenges that other entities have at the university and the dilemmas of the campus at-large. The

administrator can offer his or her perspective and various skills that can be extremely valuable in other areas of the campus community. Upper administration should take every measure not to limit the full potential of the administrator and confine their talents and insight to committees and functions related solely to diversity.

Provide a full range of leadership opportunities for the administrator within the department, unit, college, and university. This suggestion could be very appealing to an administrator who is interested in gaining extensive leadership skills. However, it is important to remember that the administrator does have other responsibilities within his or her job description. These leadership opportunities should be offered gradually as the administrator continues to develop and become more familiar with the university and his or her own job duties. The administrator should not be overwhelmed and feel as though they cannot spend the necessary time on his or her specific job responsibilities. It would be a waste of time and resources for the administrator to delegate responsibilities instead of taking part in the opportunities intended to assist them in their professional growth.

Provide financial support to join and attend national meetings and professional organizations. The opportunity to join and attend national meetings of professional organizations can open many doors for the administrator. The individual could become a member of a committee related to their professional interests within the organization or be elected to the executive board of that association. These opportunities can enhance skills that the administrator may or may not be utilizing on their campus. Interaction with other administrators at professional development activities is always a helpful tool. As a result, the administrator is able to assess the programs and services provided on his or her campus and also engage in dialogue with other administrators on best practices.

Provide in-service professional development opportunities where the administrator might grow and develop at the university. This is a beneficial way for the administrator to supplement his or her skills. It is a great way to build relationships with others at the university and to determine the resources that are available. Institutions should consider a professional growth and development plan that complements both the position and the desired skill set. This is also contingent upon the position the African American professional occupies at the institution. It should be incumbent upon the institution to recognize that these professional development opportunities may not necessarily take the traditional path as White administrators.

Provide monthly release time for the administrator as a substitute for additional hours worked (e.g., advising) with the underrepresented student populations. Administrators can use this opportunity to make connections with the student population, while not overwhelming them with additional tasks. Some administrators may be very interested in serving in these capacities on campus and find these experiences rewarding. They will be more aware of student perspectives and the campus climate for students of color. It would also demonstrate to the student population that there are administrators who care about the well being of students of color at the institution.

Focus on strengthening the surrounding African American community by rewarding participation in local community organizations, business, and industry. Participation in local community organizations, business, and industry in the surrounding African American community could assist in forming a sense of connection between the administrator and the community. Additionally, this connection could be twofold: the university will benefit from the residual connections formed. This is especially true for

colleges and universities that are in rural areas that do not have a large African American population. Institutions should also consider the "quality of life" issues both on campus as well as off. The assumption by many is that administrators of color will not work at rural campuses. The unfair assumption is that African American only wants to work in urban settings. Also, "quality of life" is not always tied to salary. Smith (1996) found in her research that many myths about faculty of color, particularly African American faculty, could be debunked. Institutions should be more purposeful in considering recruitment and retention strategies.

Conclusion and Implications

Teachers often leave education as a career for reasons such as low salaries and lack of advancement, perhaps most significant among these reasons is the seemingly low emphasis on professional development within the organization's (i.e., the school and school district's) goals and objectives (McCreight, 2000). The phenomenon of career-exit due to an absence of professional development is not specific to the elementary and secondary school teaching environment. Higher and postsecondary faculty reportedly change their job status in search of more advanced employment opportunities, and overall job satisfaction (Becker & Schaffner, 1999). In addition to faculty, higher and postsecondary educational administrators experience low job morale, daily job-related stress from intense work demands, lack of encouragement, and job role ambiguity (Gmelch & Chan, 1994; Konrad & Pfeffer, 1991). It has been suggested that creating an environment that actively promotes job renewal and increased collaboration between colleagues directly influences an employee's tenure in their current capacity, which increases their job retention (Durrington & Bacon, 1999; Haruta & Stevenson, 1999).

Dolly (1998) argues that traditional methods of socialization and support within institutions of higher education (e.g., mentoring) do not fulfill the present day needs of faculty. In addition to faculty, augmented campus integration efforts are strongly associated with increased tenure for racially and ethnically diverse higher education administrators. These educational administrators commonly experience lack of guidance and support, racial/ethnic prejudice, and decreased professional development opportunities upon entrance and during their career in academe, which can negatively affect their status during promotion review (Dolly, 1998). Turner, Myers, and Creswell (1999) suggest that the whole campus environment should work cooperatively to create an environment that actively seeks to redress problems concerning racial/ethnic diversity, as it is a key correlate to the retention of racially diverse populations.

The practical steps to address the professional growth of African American administrators at PWIs presented in this paper offers a guide to addressing the special needs of this particular ethnic category of administrators. The information provides an initial set of guidelines and examples of ways that an institution can demonstrate that it values this group. Although developed specifically for African American administrators, these steps may have applicability to other administrator of color, as well as administrators in general. From this preliminary analysis, one significant finding seems to emerge. That is, there seems to be a logical linkage between the use of professional development and retention. Specific to this study, the opportunities to learn and grow in one's position are positive factors that contribute to retention.

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